studying the gas reserves in Tripura and the economic feasibility of a cross country pipeline to Bangladesh and Myanmar;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) by when the study is proposed to be completed?

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) ONGC has signed a MOU with M/s. UNOCAL Corporation of USA for joint study of Tripura area (outside the exploration block AA-ON-3 offered by Government of India).

(b) The objectives of the joint study as per MOU are:—

(1) To review and determine the hydrocarbon resources already discovered by ONGC.

(2) To determine the potential for new reserves to be discovered; and

(3) to investigate the potential for commercially exploiting these resources.

(c) Study is to start in March, 1997 and is expected to be completed in a period of eighteen months.

Interest on Security Deposits for LPG Connections

605. SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the purpose of charging the security deposit from consumers for providing new LPG connections, the manner in which this amount is utilised by Government and the total amount of security deposits with Government upto December 31, 1996;

(b) whether Government propose to pay interest on such deposits, on the lines of Ministry of Telecommunications; if not, whether Government would consider such a step; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor and what is the justification for blocking such huge amounts received from the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PATROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The deposit is taken by the oil companies as security against LPG equipment loaned to the customers and is refundable as and when the equipment is surrendered.

The deposit is utilised to maintain adequate inventory of LPG equipments in usable condition at all times so as to service the customer's requirements. On an average 1.5 cylinder per customer is required to be maintained by the oil companies for servicing their requirements.

As on 31.12.96 the security deposit collected by oil comapneis was about Rs. 2386 crores.

Trial production from two weels in East Godavari District

606. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any trial production from two more wells of ONGC, Ponnamenda-I and Malikipalli-I, in the Krishna Godavari Basin in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether findings of the surveys in these two belts have been encouraging;

(c) if so, what is the total quantity of crude oil likely to be available from these two belts; and

(d) by when crude oil is likely to be obtained from these wells?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. One location each on these two gas bearing prospects have been released for drilling. The total quantity of gas available can be assessed on the basis of the drilling results.